

hend and interpret the experiences of this life. We are in a *school-room*, not on a *play-ground*, and our heavenly Father is the loving master preparing us for His use. There are those whose lives are filled with peculiar trials and difficulties—trials and difficulties peculiar to them alone. They have hoped to escape them—there is no apparent reason why they should meet them—but they have come. May these not be of God's own appointment? We have an individuality of character and may these allotments of experience be of God's own sending to prepare us for the accomplishment of a special divine purpose. Peter's work was wholly different from that of John; and his whole life followed the line of his original endowments. He was to illustrate the development of the Christ life in a wholly different way, and so the conquests and defeats, the storms and calms in these two lives were in accordance with the divine purpose in each man. May it not be so in our life? Is not all our life and every part of our experience a part of God's plan and purpose? And should not the appreciation of this increase our trust and confidence in God, that in all we do or suffer we are guarded and guided by a Father's love?

There is also a much needed lesson in the seemingly curt reply that Jesus made to the question asked by Peter touching John's death. The Lord answers, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me!" We are not to waste life's energies in seeking to know what lies either before us or our friends. Life is a time for action rather than curious inquiry. How many foolish questions are asked each day and how much energy is lost in attempting to answer them. Our Lord does not condemn inquiry. There could be no advance in knowledge without it. But he does certainly condemn foolish inquiry; and announces the grand lesson that the appointed task for each one is to follow him. Following Jesus is the indispensable condition to a fuller knowledge of him. Jesus said to the first disciples, "Come and ye shall know." The world of today has turned this the other way around and demands that it see and know before it will come. And then, how we that profess to be followers of Jesus question concerning our duty to the church, to each other, and to the various reform movements. How much time we lose each year. Let us learn from this answer of Jesus to Peter's question, that *working not questioning is the Christian's duty*.

And here is another important lesson: that the work that we are called upon to do lies generally in the way of our capacities and powers. Peter was called to a life of intense activity. He was fitted in every way to be a forerunner of the gospel. We would not expect him to write much or continue long in one place. His life must be active. And so it was. Who can read the Acts of the Apostles without wondering at the work done by Peter—the sermons preached, conversations held and places visited. But John's

life was comparatively an uneventful one. His time was spent in meditating upon the words that had fallen from his Master's lips. But who that thinks John's life not well spent? Who can measure our loss were we to be deprived of the gospel and letters that he wrote during those years of quiet? Certainly each one glorified God according to his native capacities and powers. And so it is in our lives. We are, first of all, to follow Jesus, and as we thus follow, what we are to do will become manifest, and it will be in the path-way of our original endowments. Only as we follow Jesus will we find our place and work in God's plan; and only as we find our place and work will we find inspiration and hope and peace.

The recognition of the truth that each life is a plan of God places all lives and all activities upon a common basis. There is a sense in which one life may be worth more than another. But this is making the estimate from the standpoint of the agent alone, whereas the situation in which the agent acts must also be taken into account. Moreover it is not ours to estimate. We can know neither God's plan nor the agent's capacities and powers. Again our Lord's rebuke, "What is it to thee," and his injunction, "Follow thou me," is especially needed.

If these two men, Peter and John, were living and acting today, it is quite certain that Peter would receive the world's approval, so prone mankind is to worship men of action. And does not the same fault inhere in the church too largely? Do we not oft-times estimate a man's worth as a Christian by his activity alone? And have we not often been deceived? Do we not often lose sight of the calm, unassuming, contemplative members of our churches and bestow unlimited praise upon the more active ones? Certainly we are not justified in making such a discrimination. Both have a part in the economy of God. Moreover the longest life was granted to St. John and it, too, was spent in accomplishing a Divine plan. St. John came after both Peter and Paul to complete what they had begun; and the message given by him to the world during those years of quiet contemplation is the most precious possession of the church. Peter's character is interesting because of its activity, not because of what he taught or thought. But John sets forth for us the deepest mysteries of the Christian faith and opens to us the innermost secrets of the Christian life.

Christ's message to St. Peter certainly warrants the statement that for the preservation and progress of the church these two characters must be united. The one is supplementary to the other. The mission of the church is to bring the world towards the perfectness of God; and this end is to be realized not in any one individual but in the full development of all. Each one of us must realize what the divine power in Christianity can do for us. Individual regeneration must precede national regeneration. The kingdom of heaven can come only thru

the individual. The call of each one of us to follow Christ is a call to realize and manifest individually the kingdom of heaven. "For the kingdom of heaven is within you." Jesus' call to the individual is to become Christian, that is bring all one's powers and capacities into subjection to his will. But these may be either active or passive. Were the active powers only seen the end of Christianity would be only half gained; and were the active powers not developed at all the aggressive force of Christianity would be lost altogether. Thru out scripture God has joined the man of action and the man of meditation. This fact is very apparent in the selection of the twelve. To each of these God has assigned a place and work in his economy. Let us not attempt either to disparage the work of each or even to separate them; for both are necessary to the progress and deepening of the work of Christianity.

Certainly the Master meant to teach these two disciples and us that each man's life, whatever his gifts or character, is a part of a Divine plan; and that not to find and fill the place assigned us means, in a measure, to frustrate God's plan. Moreover the success and happiness of our lives depends solely upon our finding our place and work in this plan; and that this plan and work always lays in the pathway of native endowments. This plan and work is to be found only in following Jesus. This we are commanded to do first of all. The supreme question then with each one of us should be not only to make a living but to live where God wants us; not to attain success but find our place in the service of God which alone means success. We are not to be concerned about the work of another, for the call is personal. Nor are we to concern ourselves with the natural ending of our lives, but to hear the call of Jesus to enter now upon the duties and struggles of life. The call of Jesus, "Follow thou me," fills up the whole sphere of duty; and his other word, "What is it to thee," places the future in his keeping and gives each one of us the promise of perfect power and peace.

#### THE MORAL CHARACTER OF GOD

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Nature tells us that God is. The Bible alone tells us what he is. The Westminster Shorter Catechism admirably expresses the Scripture truth that, "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." The last four are his moral attributes. They reveal his character.

God is holy. Holiness is the purity of his nature and his hatred of all sin. It is his "consummate whiteness." His holiness is the perfection of his character. His power is called holy. His promises are holy, and therefore certain of fulfillment. His truth is holy, so that he cannot lie. He is holy in all his works.

God is just. Justice is the quality that impels him to give every one his due. He is a righteous ruler, and, as such, he appoints